A Level English Literature Bridging Activities

Useful activities to bridge the gap from GCSE to A Level.

1. Suggested reading

To prepare yourself for the study of Comedy, it would be helpful to read some texts in this genre, so you can familiarise yourself with the devices, themes and types of characters that often recur.

The following comic novels are included on the AS Paper:	Small Island
	Emma
	Wise Children
The following comic plays are also included:	She Stoops to Conquer
	The Taming of the Shrew
	The Importance of Being Earnest

We will be studying *Earnest*, *Shrew* and *Wise Children* in class

2. Theatrical Comedy – An Useful Overview

Dr Sean McEvoy's essay about the development of English theatrical comedy will give you a sense of how the genre has developed over time. Highlight the key ideas from each of the following paragraphs:

Ancient Roots – Old Comedy

The dramatic formats established by the Greeks endured a very long time afterwards. In classical Athens, comedy was set apart from tragedy. The earliest theatre took place in competitive festivals, where comedy was performed on a separate day from the tragedies. Athenian 'Old Comedy' went all out for laughs, even though the writers often had important political statements to make. We now only have plays by one comic dramatist, Aristophanes (c.445-c.385 BC). His works are raucous and zany. Satire – the mocking of figures in the public eye, whether politicians, philosophers or playwrights – is its constant mode. Bawdy (sexual) and scatological (toilet) humour were to the fore, and were not necessarily regarded as simply means of entertaining the 'lower orders'. These comedies had plots of a kind, but their storylines tended to be mere frameworks on which to hang a series of set-piece sketches and slapstick routines not necessarily connected to the forward movement of the narrative.

New Comedy

An important change occurred when, towards the end of his career, the tragedian Euripides started writing what later became known as 'romances'. These were plays such as Helen (412 BC) which followed the formal structure of tragedies, but featured happy endings where long-lost family members were reunited. This template was later developed by the Greek comic dramatist Menander (342-c.292 BC) into what was known as 'New Comedy'. Plot was now central. The plays usually concerned love-entanglements in the lives of young well-to-do Athenians. Characters tended to fit into recognisable types: the love-struck young man, the cunning but cowardly slave, the angry father, the bragging soldier, the kind-hearted prostitute. The pace was fast, the dialogue was witty and the happy ending often required some implausible turn-up, such

as the discovery of a long-lost child. Sex and political satire were no longer important to the genre. When the Romans began to write their own comedies a hundred years later, they took Menander's model of comedy and developed it for themselves. The Roman plays of Plautus (c.250-184 BC) and Terence (193-159 BC) survived into the modern world to become an important part of the grammar school curriculum in Tudor England.

Shakespeare Et Cetera

So, when the first English commercial dramatists began to write comedies for the public playhouses from the 1580s onwards they already had a genre to imitate. Shakespeare's comedies are much more sophisticated than those of Menander and Plautus, but in *A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Twelfth Night* – and even in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well* – plot, character and wit still drive the action. Young love overcomes difficulties and multiple marriage brings about a resolution, whether satisfying or not. But 'comedy' here doesn't necessarily mean that these plays are primarily funny: a substantial part of The Merchant of Venice is concerned with anti-Semitism and vengeance, and most of Measure for Measure deals with the corrupt ruler Angelo's attempts to bed the super-chaste Isabella in exchange for her condemned brother's life. 'Comedy' refers to the formal conventions followed by the play, rather than to how funny the drama might be. Shakespeare's funniest creation for many people is Sir John Falstaff in the two *Henry IV* history plays (and not in the 'comedy' *The Merry Wives of Windsor*). The tragedy *Hamlet* has many more laughs than *All's Well That Ends Well*. Shakespeare's funniest comedy is perhaps the one which copies the Roman plays most closely: *The Comedy of Errors*.

But Shakespeare's comedies weren't just taken from classical models. The pre-commercial, community-based English theatre of the Middle Ages and early Tudor period frequently mixed slapstick and even bawdy humour with the treatment of serious religious matters. But unlike in Aristophanes' theatre this kind of fun now began to be associated with the tastes of those of lower social status. A popular tradition of comedy developed in theatres such as The Red Bull, based more on spectacle, action and physical humour. At the same time Shakespeare's friend Ben Jonson had read Aristophanes, and his great comedies such as *Volpone* (1606) and *The Alchemist* (1611) reinstate political and contemporary satire, bawdiness, and grotesque characterisation alongside the most dazzling of plots and audience- teasing ruses. Jonson's language can shift from obscenity to lyrical beauty in a trice. His dialogue sounds out the speech of real Londoners but with a constant poetic eloquence.

Jonson influenced the founding of what was known as 'city comedy' in the first two decades of the seventeenth century. In plays such as Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1606) or *Eastward Ho* (1605) – in which Jonson had a hand – the values of honest London shopkeepers triumph over the misplaced cunning of feckless but greedy aristocratic layabouts. Thwarted love remained the main plot strand, and marriage still constituted the happy ending.

Restoration Rudeness and the Revenge of the Respectable

Puritan dominance in London ensured the closure of the theatres during the Civil War and Protectorate (1642-1660), but when King Charles II returned from exile in France in 1660, city comedy was revived with a new twist. In Restoration Comedy the bawdy and licentious aristocratic layabouts get all the best lines and the honest people whom they dupe and attempt to seduce don't come off so well. Double entendre and farcical intrigue are the staple of plays such as Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675). In Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676) satire is added to the mix: the main character is a parody of the court rake and playwright the Earl of Rochester. In fact the theatre was very close to the court and its libertine lifestyle, and

consequently an important change came into the theatre at this time, copied from France. Tragedy lost its comic element. 'Decorum' or sober good taste was the new watchword; comedy became very much a separate genre. When respectable and godly middle-class opinion reacted to the bawdy excess of Restoration Comedy, what followed in the years ahead tended to be insipid and sentimental comedies of manners. The very best exceptions, such as Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) and Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775) combined brilliance of plotting with superb comic characterisation. But at this point comedy in the mainstream theatre had come to mean a sentimental tale of thwarted love featuring a broadly predictable gallery of stock characters.

Zany and satirical comedy continued in the rumbustious working-class theatres of the nineteenth- century cities, where parodies of Shakespeare and of 'legitimate' drama were also popular. Farce and sketch-based comedy continued in the 'afterpieces' shown at the end of the evening in the big London playhouses. Admission was half-price during the second half of the evening and the cheap benches filled up to watch these surviving popular forms of theatre after the tragedians had finished their work.

Comedy gets Serious

As happened with many art forms, the turn of the twentieth century brought great change to the theatre. Oscar Wilde's comedies, and in particular his enormously successful *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), exploded for ever the comedy of respectable but thwarted love in its brilliantly self- conscious send-up of the conventions of the whole genre as it had existed. It was not so much that Wilde expressed a political critique of the middle-class values dominant in comedy, but rather that he made it impossible to take the form seriously ever again, though the genre staggered on in light- hearted pieces such as Brighouse's *Hobson's Choice* (1916) for many years. A new 'realistic' form of theatre arose dedicated to political critique, influenced in particular by the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen. Prominent here was George Bernard Shaw. Shaw reinstated comedy in the heart of the 'serious' play. His *Pygmalion* (1912), for example, succeeded in being hilarious at the same time as making powerful insights into class, language and power in Edwardian England. 'French' Farce – a comedy of misunderstanding, evasions and embarrassment which accelerates towards finely-tuned chaos and a climactic denouement – was also a successful import at this time, especially in the work of Ben Travers in the 1920s and 30s.

Post-War Comedy

In the years after World War Two the English theatre underwent a great revival and comedy flourished in many forms, no longer as a genre with limited conventions. The rebirth of the English stage was often driven by working-class and left-wing writers, and satire was prominent. Joe Orton adapted the farce format in a series of highly irreverent comedies attacking middle-class hypocrisy, sexual and otherwise. *Loot* (1965) and *What the Butler Saw* (1969) stand out here. Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party* (1977) combines an excoriating attack on suburban materialism with a sense of real pathos for the lives of those condemned to live in such a world. In a gentler vein, the domestic comedies of Alan Ayckbourn, such as *Absurd Person Singular* (1972), often have a farce-like structure which expresses a sadness and hollowness at the heart of 'respectable' British society. Farce has remained a highly popular format to the present day, whether it deals with a playful satire of the theatre itself as in Michael Frayn's *Noises Off (*1982), with Irish Republican terrorism as in Martin McDonagh's *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001), or in a traditional reworking of an old Italian comedy such as Richard Bean's *One Man, Two Guvnors* (2011). Standing apart from such social critique were the post-modern comedies of Tom Stoppard, whose laughter arises from a self-consciously clever playfulness, whether with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1969), or with a bizarre conjunction of philosophical scepticism and moon landings in *Jumpers* (1972).

Political Comedy

Many of these new writers brought back into the mainstream theatre the popular comedy traditions which had been banished to music hall, 'variety' and working men's clubs in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Trevor Griffiths' *Comedians* (1975) puts working-class stand-up comedy on stage in an examination of the nature of comedy itself, in a play whose political critique powerfully anticipates the changes to British society after the breakdown of the social-democratic consensus in the late 1970s. Theatrical comedy became a powerful voice of opposition to a series of right-wing governments after 1979. In the 1980s David Hare's *Pravda* (1985) attacked the principles of the Murdoch news empire in a manner which can now be seen as extraordinarily prescient, while Caryl Churchill's uncannily prophetic *Serious Money* (1987) drew on Restoration Comedy and contemporary music to produce a brilliant satire on the newly deregulated money-men and women of the City of London.

Contemporary Comedy

Contemporary comedy is typically structured around a series of bravura set-piece scenes which echo the sketch-format of popular theatre and much TV comedy, yet preserve the rhythms and structures of the 'well-made plays' of the twentieth century: exposition, complication, cliff-hanger, resolution. There is often, however, a tragic edge. Two of the best and most popular plays of this century so far, Alan Bennett's *The History Boys* (2004) and Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem* (2009), exemplify these qualities. Both are also moving and intelligent reflections on their societies. Bennett's play is an examination of the value of education, literature and love in a market-driven managerialist England, while Butterworth also writes elegiacally, if rumbustiously, about a semi-legendary, wild and outrageous rural England which is passing away before we have understood its worth.

English comedy today turns out to be more like Aristophanes than Shakespeare: not so much a recognisable genre, but rather an uncovering of the fear, anarchy and joy just beneath the surface of a fragile society. Yet there are signs that a possible happy ending may still be found

Source: Dr Sean McEvoy, Dramatic Genres: Studying Comedy, English and Media Centre, 2012

3. Poetry Analysis

Now that you have an overview of dramatic texts, let's have a look at some poetry. This unit is to help you get to grips with analysing author's methods. Read through the poem by Carol Ann Duffy below. If you need to, look up the story of King Midas to get some relevant context for the poem.

Mrs Midas

It was late September, I'd just poured a glass of wine, begun
to unwind, while the vegetables cooked. The kitchen
filled with the smell of itself, relaxed, its steamy breath
gently blanching the windows. So I opened one,
then with my fingers wiped the other's glass like a brow.
He was standing under the pear-tree snapping a twig.

Now the garden was long and visibility poor, the way
the dark of the ground seems to drink the light of the sky,
but that twig in his hand was gold. And then he plucked
a pear from a branch, we grew Fondante d'Automne,
and it sat in his palm like a light-bulb. On.
I thought to myself, is he putting fairy lights in the tree?

He came into the house. The door knobs gleamed.
He drew the blinds. You know the mind; I thought of
the Field of the Cloth of Gold and of Miss Macready.
He sat in that chair like a king on a burnished throne.
The look on his face was strange, wild, vain; I said,
What in the name of God is going on? He started to laugh.

I served up the meal. For starters, corn on the cob.
Within seconds he was spitting out the teeth of the rich.
He toyed with his spoon, then mine, then with the knives, the forks.
He asked where was the wine. I poured with a shaking hand,
A fragrant bone-dry white from Italy, then watched
As he picked up the glass, goblet, golden chalice, drank.

It was then that I started to scream. He sank to his knees.
After we'd both calmed down, I finished the wine
On my own, hearing him out. I made him sit
On the other side of the room and keep his hands to himself.
I locked the cat in the cellar. I moved the phone.
The toilet I didn't mind. I couldn't believe my ears;

How he'd had a wish. Look, we all have wishes; granted.
But who has wishes granted? Him. Do you know about gold?
It feeds no one; aurum, soft, untarnishable; slakes
No thirst. He tried to light a cigarette; I gazed, entranced,
As the blue flame played on its luteous stem. At least,
I said, you'll be able to give up smoking for good.

Separate beds. In fact I put a chair against my door
near petrified. He was below, turning the spare room
into the tomb of Tutankhamun. You see, we were passionate then,
in those halcyon days; unwrapping each other, rapidly,
like presents, fast food. But now I feared his honeyed embrace,
the kiss that would turn my lips to a work of art.

And who, when it comes to the crunch, can live
with a heart of gold? That night, I dreamt I bore
his child, its perfect ore limbs, its little tongue
like a precious latch, its amber eyes
holding their pupils like flies. My dream-milk
burned in my breasts. I woke to streaming sun.

So he had to move out. We'd a caravan
in the wilds, in a glade of its own. I drove him up
under cover of dark. He sat in the back.
And then I came home, the woman who married the fool
who wished for gold. At first I visited, odd times,
parking the car a good way off, then walking.

You knew you were getting close. Golden trout
on the grass. One day, a hare hung from a larch,
a beautiful lemon mistake. And then his footprints,
glistening next to the rivers path. He was thin,
delirious; hearing, he said, the music of Pan
from the woods. Listen. That was the last straw.

What gets me now is not the idiocy or greed
but lack of thought for me. Pure selfishness. I sold
the contents of the house and came down here.
I think of him in certain lights, dawn, late afternoon,
and once a bowl of apples stopped me dead. I miss most,
even now, his hands, his warm hands on my skin, his touch.

Carol Ann Duffy

Now answer the following questions in as much detail as you can:

1. What sort of atmosphere is created in the first verse and how?
2. What effect does the poet's personification of the kitchen have?
3. What is the effect of the structure of the first verse?
4. Explain the appropriateness of the simile in the second verse.
5. What is the effect of the one word sentence "On." In the second verse?
6. What are the "teeth of the rich"?
7. Why is she concerned about the cat and the phone, but not the toilet?
8. Comment on any humour, puns or plays on words that you can find in the poem.
9. Analyse the effect of four other images in the poem.
10. How do you respond to the last verse?
11. What do you think the poem might be called?

Below is some evidence you want to use from the poem (the sandwich filling) to make some points about form, structure and language. There are 5 pieces of evidence. Your task is to construct 5 points around the evidence by writing the introductory point and then afterwards, analysing the evidence more closely. This activity should produce a range of points from each student since not all ideas about why the evidence is there will be the same: we all have our own interpretations remember:

1. The kitchen

    filled with the smell of itself, relaxed, its steamy breath
    gently blanching the windows.

2. '…it sat in his palm like a light-bulb. On.'

3. 'Within seconds he was spitting out the teeth of the rich.'

4. '…he picked up the glass, goblet, golden chalice, drank.'

5. I locked the cat in the cellar. I moved the phone.
    The toilet I didn't mind.

4. Narratology in prose fiction: short stories

Now read the short story, and complete the questions that follow it.

Ambrose Bierce – 'One of the Missing' (1888)

Jerome Searing, a private soldier of General Sherman's army, then confronting the enemy at and about Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia, turned his back upon a small group of officers with whom he had been talking in low tones, stepped across a light line of earthworks, and disappeared in a forest. None of the men in line behind the work had said a word to him, nor had he so much as nodded to them in passing, but all who saw understood that this brave man had been intrusted with some perilous duty. Jerome Searing, though a private, did not serve in the ranks; he was detailed for service at division headquarters, being borne upon the rolls as an orderly. "Orderly" is a word covering a multitude of duties. An orderly may be a messenger, a clerk, an officer's servant--anything. He may perform services for which no provision is made in orders and army regulations. Their nature may depend upon his aptitude, upon favor, upon accident. Private Searing, an incomparable marksman, young, hardy, intelligent and insensible to fear, was a scout. The general commanding his division was not content to obey orders blindly without knowing what was in his front, even when his command was not on detached service, but formed a fraction of the line of the army; nor was he satisfied to receive his knowledge of his vis-a-vis through the customary channels; he wanted to know more than he was apprised of by the corps commander and the collisions of pickets and skirmishers. Hence Jerome Searing, with his extraordinary daring, his woodcraft, his sharp eyes, and truthful tongue. On this occasion his instructions were simple: to get as near the enemy's lines as possible and learn all that he could.

In a few moments he had arrived at the picketline, the men on duty there lying in groups of two and four behind little banks of earth scooped out of the slight depression in which they lay, their rifles protruding from the green boughs with which they had masked their small defenses. The forest extended without a break toward the front, so solemn and silent that only by an effort of the imagination could it be conceived as populous with armed men, alert and vigilant--a forest formidable with possibilities of battle. Pausing a moment in one of these rifle-pits to apprise the men of his

intention Searing crept stealthily forward on his hands and knees and was soon lost to view in a dense thicket of underbrush.

"That is the last of him," said one of the men; "I wish I had his rifle; those fellows will hurt some of us with it."

Searing crept on, taking advantage of every accident of ground and growth to give himself better cover. His eyes penetrated everywhere, his ears took note of every sound. He stilled his breathing, and at the cracking of a twig beneath his knee stopped his progress and hugged the earth. It was slow work, but not tedious; the danger made it exciting, but by no physical signs was the excitement manifest. His pulse was as regular, his nerves were as steady as if he were trying to trap a sparrow.

"It seems a long time," he thought, "but I cannot have come very far; I am still alive."

He smiled at his own method of estimating distance, and crept forward. A moment later he suddenly flattened himself upon the earth and lay motionless, minute after minute. Through a narrow opening in the bushes he had caught sight of a small mound of yellow clay--one of the enemy's rifle-pits. After some little time he cautiously raised his head, inch by inch, then his body upon his hands, spread out on each side of him, all the while intently regarding the hillock of clay. In another moment he was upon his feet, rifle in hand, striding rapidly forward with little attempt at concealment. He had rightly interpreted the signs, whatever they were; the enemy was gone.

To assure himself beyond a doubt before going back to report upon so important a matter, Searing pushed forward across the line of abandoned pits, running from cover to cover in the more open forest, his eyes vigilant to discover possible stragglers. He came to the edge of a plantation--one of those forlorn, deserted homesteads of the last years of the war, upgrown with brambles, ugly with broken fences and desolate with vacant buildings having blank apertures in place of doors and windows. After a keen reconnaissance from the safe seclusion of a clump of young pines Searing ran lightly across a field and through an orchard to a small structure which stood apart from the other farm buildings, on a slight elevation. This he thought would enable him to overlook a large scope of country in the direction that he supposed the enemy to have taken in withdrawing. This building, which had originally consisted of a single room elevated upon four posts about ten feet high, was now little more than a roof; the floor had fallen away, the joists and planks loosely piled on the ground below or resting on end at various angles, not wholly torn from their fastening above. The supporting posts were themselves no longer vertical. It looked as if the whole edifice would go down at the touch of a finger.

Concealing himself in the débris of joists and flooring Searing looked across the open ground between his point of view and a spur of Kennesaw Mountain, a half-mile away. A road leading up and across this spur was crowded with troops--the rear-guard of the retiring enemy, their gun-barrels gleaming in the morning sunlight.

Searing had now learned all that he could hope to know. It was his duty to return to his own command with all possible speed and report his discovery. But the gray column of Confederates toiling up the mountain road was singularly tempting. His rifle--an ordinary "Springfield," but fitted with a globe sight and hair-trigger--would easily send its ounce and a quarter of lead hissing into their midst. That

would probably not affect the duration and result of the war, but it is the business of a soldier to kill. It is also his habit if he is a good soldier. Searing cocked his rifle and "set" the trigger.

But it was decreed from the beginning of time that Private Searing was not to murder anybody that bright summer morning, nor was the Confederate retreat to be announced by him. For countless ages events had been so matching themselves together in that wondrous mosaic to some parts of which, dimly discernible, we give the name of history, that the acts which he had in will would have marred the harmony of the pattern. Some twenty-five years previously the Power charged with the execution of the work according to the design had provided against that mischance by causing the birth of a certain male child in a little village at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, had carefully reared it, supervised its education, directed its desires into a military channel, and in due time made it an officer of artillery. By the concurrence of an infinite number of favoring influences and their preponderance over an infinite number of opposing ones, this officer of artillery had been made to commit a breach of discipline and flee from his native country to avoid punishment. He had been directed to New Orleans (instead of New York), where a recruiting officer awaited him on the wharf. He was enlisted and promoted, and things were so ordered that he now commanded a Confederate battery some two miles along the line from where Jerome Searing, the Federal scout, stood cocking his rifle. Nothing had been neglected--at every step in the progress of both these men's lives, and in the lives of their contemporaries of their ancestors, the right thing had been done to bring about the desired result. Had anything in all this vast concatenation been overlooked Private Searing might have fired on the retreating Confederates that morning, and would perhaps have missed. As it fell out, a Confederate captain of artillery, having nothing better to do while awaiting his turn to pull out and be off, amused himself by sighting a field-piece obliquely to his right at what he mistook for some Federal officers on the crest of a hill, and discharged it. The shot flew high of its mark.

As Jerome Searing drew back the hammer of his rifle and with his eyes upon the distant Confederates considered where he could plant his shot with the best hope of making a widow or an orphan or a childless mother,--perhaps all three, for Private Searing, although he had repeatedly refused promotion, was not without a certain kind of ambition,--he heard a rushing sound in the air, like that made by the wings of a great bird swooping down upon its prey. More quickly than he could apprehend the gradation, it increased to a hoarse and horrible roar, as the missile that made it sprang at him out of the sky, striking with a deafening impact one of the posts supporting the confusion of timbers above him, smashing it into matchwood, and bringing down the crazy edifice with a loud clatter, in clouds of blinding dust!

When Jerome Searing recovered consciousness he did not at once understand what had occurred. It was, indeed, some time before he opened his eyes. For a while he believed that he had died and been buried, and he tried to recall some portions of the burial service. He thought that his wife was kneeling upon his grave, adding her weight to that of the earth upon his breast. The two of them, widow and earth, had crushed his coffin. Unless the children should persuade her to go home he would not much longer be able to breathe. He felt a sense of wrong. "I cannot speak to her," he thought; "the dead have no voice; and if I open my eyes I shall get them full of earth."

He opened his eyes. A great expanse of blue sky, rising from a fringe of the tops of trees. In the foreground, shutting out some of the trees, a high, dun mound, angular in outline and crossed by an intricate, patternless system of straight lines; the whole an immeasurable distance away--a distance so inconceivably great that it fatigued him, and he closed his eyes. The moment that he did so he was

conscious of an insufferable light. A sound was in his ears like the low, rhythmic thunder of a distant sea breaking in successive waves upon the beach, and out of this noise, seeming a part of it, or possibly coming from beyond it, and intermingled with its ceaseless undertone, came the articulate words: "Jerome Searing, you are caught like a rat in a trap--in a trap, trap, trap."

Suddenly there fell a great silence, a black darkness, an infinite tranquillity, and Jerome Searing, perfectly conscious of his rathood, and well assured of the trap that he was in, remembering all and nowise alarmed, again opened his eyes to reconnoitre, to note the strength of his enemy, to plan his defense.

He was caught in a reclining posture, his back firmly supported by a solid beam. Another lay across his breast, but he had been able to shrink a little away from it so that it no longer oppressed him, though it was immovable. A brace joining it at an angle had wedged him against a pile of boards on his left, fastening the arm on that side. His legs, slightly parted and straight along the ground, were covered upward to the knees with a mass of débris which towered above his narrow horizon. His head was as rigidly fixed as in a vise; he could move his eyes, his chin--no more. Only his right arm was partly free. "You must help us out of this," he said to it. But he could not get it from under the heavy timber athwart his chest, nor move it outward more than six inches at the elbow.

Searing was not seriously injured, nor did he suffer pain. A smart rap on the head from a flying fragment of the splintered post, incurred simultaneously with the frightfully sudden shock to the nervous system, had momentarily dazed him. His term of unconsciousness, including the period of recovery, during which he had had the strange fancies, had probably not exceeded a few seconds, for the dust of the wreck had not wholly cleared away as he began an intelligent survey of the situation.

With his partly free right hand he now tried to get hold of the beam that lay across, but not quite against, his breast. In no way could he do so. He was unable to depress the shoulder so as to push the elbow beyond that edge of the timber which was nearest his knees; failing in that, he could not raise the forearm and hand to grasp the beam. The brace that made an angle with it downward and backward prevented him from doing anything in that direction, and between it and his body the space was not half so wide as the length of his forearm. Obviously he could not get his hand under the beam nor over it; the hand could not, in fact, touch it at all. Having demonstrated his inability, he desisted, and began to think whether he could reach any of the débris piled upon his legs.

In surveying the mass with a view to determining that point, his attention was arrested by what seemed to be a ring of shining metal immediately in front of his eyes. It appeared to him at first to surround some perfectly black substance, and it was somewhat more than a half-inch in diameter. It suddenly occurred to his mind that the blackness was simply shadow and that the ring was in fact the muzzle of his rifle protruding from the pile of débris. He was not long in satisfying himself that this was so--if it was a satisfaction. By closing either eye he could look a little way along the barrel--to the point where it was hidden by the rubbish that held it. He could see the one side, with the corresponding eye, at apparently the same angle as the other side with the other eye. Looking with the right eye, the weapon seemed to be directed at a point to the left of his head, and vice versa. He was unable to see the upper surface of the barrel, but could see the under surface of the stock at a slight angle. The piece was, in fact, aimed at the exact centre of his forehead.

In the perception of this circumstance, in the recollection that just previously to the mischance of which this uncomfortable situation was the result he had cocked the rifle and set the trigger so that a touch would discharge it, Private Searing was affected with a feeling of uneasiness. But that was as far as possible from fear; he was a brave man, somewhat familiar with the aspect of rifles from that point of view, and of cannon too. And now he recalled, with something like amusement, an incident of his experience at the storming of Missionary Ridge, where, walking up to one of the enemy's embrasures from which he had seen a heavy gun throw charge after charge of grape among the assailants he had thought for a moment that the piece had been withdrawn; he could see nothing in the opening but a brazen circle. What that was he had understood just in time to step aside as it pitched another peck of iron down that swarming slope. To face firearms is one of the commonest incidents in a soldier's life--firearms, too, with malevolent eyes blazing behind them. That is what a soldier is for. Still, Private Searing did not altogether relish the situation, and turned away his eyes.

After groping, aimless, with his right hand for a time he made an ineffectual attempt to release his left. Then he tried to disengage his head, the fixity of which was the more annoying from his ignorance of what held it. Next he tried to free his feet, but while exerting the powerful muscles of his legs for that purpose it occurred to him that a disturbance of the rubbish which held them might discharge the rifle; how it could have endured what had already befallen it he could not understand, although memory assisted him with several instances in point. One in particular he recalled, in which in a moment of mental abstraction he had clubbed his rifle and beaten out another gentleman's brains, observing afterward that the weapon which he had been diligently swinging by the muzzle was loaded, capped, and at full clock--knowledge of which circumstance would doubtless have cheered his antagonist to longer endurance. He had always smiled in recalling that blunder of his "green and salad days" as a soldier, but now he did not smile. He turned his eyes again to the muzzle of the rifle and for a moment fancied that it had moved; it seemed somewhat nearer.

Again he looked away. The tops of the distant trees beyond the bounds of the plantation interested him: he had not before observed how light and feathery they were, nor how darkly blue the sky was, even among their branches, where they somewhat paled it with their green; above him it appeared almost black. "It will be uncomfortably hot here," he thought, "as the day advances. I wonder which way I am looking."

Judging by such shadows as he could see, he decided that his face was due north; he would at least not have the sun in his eyes, and north--well, that was toward his wife and children.

"Bah!" he exclaimed aloud, "what have they to do with it?"

He closed his eyes. "As I can't get out I may as well go to sleep. The rebels are gone and some of our fellows are sure to stray out here foraging. They'll find me."

But he did not sleep. Gradually he became sensible of a pain in his forehead--a dull ache, hardly perceptible at first, but growing more and more uncomfortable. He opened his eyes and it was gone--closed them and it returned. "The devil!" he said, irrelevantly, and stared again at the sky. He heard the singing of birds, the strange metallic note of the meadow lark, suggesting the clash of vibrant blades. He fell into pleasant memories of his childhood, played again with his brother and sister, raced across the fields, shouting to alarm the sedentary larks, entered the sombre forest beyond and with timid steps followed the faint path to Ghost Rock, standing at last with audible heart-throbs before

Dead Man's Cave and seeking to penetrate its awful mystery. For the first time he observed that the opening of the haunted cavern was encircled by a ring of metal. Then all else vanished and left him gazing into the barrel of his rifle as before. But whereas before it had seemed near, it now seemed an inconceivable distance away, and all the more sinister for that. He cried out and, startled by something in his own voice--the note of fear--lied to himself in denial: "If I don't sing out I may stay here till I die."

He now made no further attempt to evade the menacing stare of the gun barrel. If he turned away his eyes an instant it was to look for assistance (although he could not see the ground on either side the ruin), and he permitted them to return, obedient to the imperative fascination. If he closed them it was from weariness, and instantly the poignant pain in his forehead--the prophecy and menace of the bullet--forced him to reopen them.

The tension of nerve and brain was too severe; nature came to his relief with intervals of unconsciousness. Reviving from one of these he became sensible of a sharp, smarting pain in his right hand, and when he worked his fingers together, or rubbed his palm with them, he could feel that they were wet and slippery. He could not see the hand, but he knew the sensation; it was running blood. In his delirium he had beaten it against the jagged fragments of the wreck, had clutched it full of splinters. He resolved that he would meet his fate more manly. He was a plain, common soldier, had no religion and not much philosophy; he could not die like a hero, with great and wise last words, even if there had been some one to hear them, but he could die "game," and he would. But if he could only know when to expect the shot!

Some rats which had probably inhabited the shed came sneaking and scampering about. One of them mounted the pile of debris that held the rifle; another followed and another. Searing regarded them at first with indifference, then with friendly interest; then, as the thought flashed into his bewildered mind that they might touch the trigger of his rifle, he cursed them and ordered them to go away. "It is no business of yours," he cried.

The creatures went away; they would return later, attack his face, gnaw away his nose, cut his throat--he knew that, but he hoped by that time to be dead.

Nothing could now unfix his gaze from the little ring of metal with its black interior. The pain in his forehead was fierce and incessant. He felt it gradually penetrating the brain more and more deeply, until at last its progress was arrested by the wood at the back of his head. It grew momentarily more insufferable: he began wantonly beating his lacerated hand against the splinters again to counteract that horrible ache. It seemed to throb with a slow, regular recurrence, each pulsation sharper than the preceding, and sometimes he cried out, thinking he felt the fatal bullet. No thoughts of home, of wife and children, of country, of glory. The whole record of memory was effaced. The world had passed away--not a vestige remained. Here in this confusion of timbers and boards is the sole universe. Here is immortality in time--each pain an everlasting life. The throbs tick off eternities.

Jerome Searing, the man of courage, the formidable enemy, the strong, resolute warrior, was as pale as a ghost. His jaw was fallen; his eyes protruded; he trembled in every fibre; a cold sweat bathed his entire body; he screamed with fear. He was not insane--he was terrified.

In groping about with his torn and bleeding hand he seized at last a strip of board, and, pulling, felt it give way. It lay parallel with his body, and by bending his elbow as much as the contracted space would permit, he could draw it a few inches at a time. Finally it was altogether loosened from the wreckage covering his legs; he could lift it clear of the ground its whole length. A great hope came into his mind: perhaps he could work it upward, that is to say backward, far enough to lift the end and push aside the rifle; or, if that were too tightly wedged, so place the strip of board as to deflect the bullet. With this object he passed it backward inch by inch, hardly daring to breathe lest that act somehow defeat his intent, and more than ever unable to remove his eyes from the rifle, which might perhaps now hasten to improve its waning opportunity. Something at least had been gained: in the occupation of his mind in this attempt at self-defense he was less sensible of the pain in his head and had ceased to wince. But he was still dreadfully frightened and his teeth rattled like castanets.

The strip of board ceased to move to the suasion of his hand. He tugged at it with all his strength, changed the direction of its length all he could, but it had met some extended obstruction behind him and the end in front was still too far away to clear the pile of debris and reach the muzzle of the gun. It extended, indeed, nearly as far as the trigger guard, which, uncovered by the rubbish, he could imperfectly see with his right eye. He tried to break the strip with his hand, but had no leverage. In his defeat, all his terror returned, augmented tenfold. The black aperture of the rifle appeared to threaten a sharper and more imminent death in punishment of his rebellion. The track of the bullet through his head ached with an intenser anguish. He began to tremble again.

Suddenly he became composed. His tremor subsided. He clenched his teeth and drew down his eyebrows. He had not exhausted his means of defense; a new design had shaped itself in his mind--another plan of battle. Raising the front end of the strip of board, he carefully pushed it forward through the wreckage at the side of the rifle until it pressed against the trigger guard. Then he moved the end slowly outward until he could feel that it had cleared it, then, closing his eyes, thrust it against the trigger with all his strength! There was no explosion; the rifle had been discharged as it dropped from his hand when the building fell. But it did its work.

Lieutenant Adrian Searing, in command of the picket-guard on that part of the line through which his brother Jerome had passed on his mission, sat with attentive ears in his breastwork behind the line. Not the faintest sound escaped him; the cry of a bird, the barking of a squirrel, the noise of the wind among the pines--all were anxiously noted by his overstrained sense. Suddenly, directly in front of his line, he heard a faint, confused rumble, like the clatter of a falling building translated by distance. The lieutenant mechanically looked at his watch. Six o'clock and eighteen minutes. At the same moment an officer approached him on foot from the rear and saluted.

"Lieutenant," said the officer, "the colonel directs you to move forward your line and feel the enemy if you find him. If not, continue the advance until directed to halt. There is reason to think that the enemy has retreated."

The lieutenant nodded and said nothing; the other officer retired. In a moment the men, apprised of their duty by the non-commissioned officers in low tones, had deployed from their rifle-pits and were moving forward in skirmishing order, with set teeth and beating hearts.

This line of skirmishers sweeps across the plantation toward the mountain. They pass on both sides of the wrecked building, observing nothing. At a short distance in their rear their commander comes.

He casts his eyes curiously upon the ruin and sees a dead body half buried in board and timbers. It is so covered with dust that its clothing is Confederate gray. Its face is yellowish white; the checks are fallen in, the temples sunken, too, with sharp ridges about them, making the forehead forbiddingly narrow; the upper lip, slightly lifted, shows the white teeth, rigidly clenched. The hair is heavy with moisture, the face as wet as the dewy grass all about. From his point of view the officer does not observe the rifle; the man was apparently killed by the fall of the building.

"Dead a week," said the officer curtly, moving on and absently pulling out his watch as if to verify his estimate of time. Six o'clock and forty minutes.

Focus on AO2 – Analysis of the methods writers use to give meaning to narratives

1. What do we know about the character of Jerome Searing?
2. What characterisation methods does Bierce use to establish these character traits?
3. How does the author manipulate our feelings of sympathy for Jerome Searing?
4. Where and when is the story set?
5. What devices does the author use that give the reader a feel for the setting and the time in which the story takes place?
6. How many voices are heard in the story?
7. Can you identify what type of narrator the story has?
8. What evidence is there that the narrator is reliable?
9. Does the narrative perspective shift at all? Does the narrator see things from more than one character's point of view?
10. Does the author use flashback (analepsis) at all in the story? Give an example and say how this adds meaning to the story.
11. The author uses prolepsis (foreshadowing) in the story with the line "But it was decreed from the beginning of time that Private Searing was not to murder anybody that bright summer morning, nor was the Confederate retreat to be announced by him". What effect is achieved by this?
12. Is there an example of repetitive discrepancy of frequency in the narrative, where a single event is narrated more than once? What effect is achieved by this?
13. What devices does the writer use to depict Searing's semi-conscious state?
14. How long is Searing actually trapped in the wrecked house for before he dies?
15. What devices are used to decelerate the narrative, to slow things down and make it feel like Searing is trapped for much longer?
16. What devices are used by the writer to create tension during the section of the story where Searing is trapped and his life is threatened by the cocked rifle?
17. The author decided not to finish the story on the line "But Jerome Searing was dead". Instead he continued for another paragraph. What effect is achieved by this?

18. Are there any narrative gaps in this story (any key events missed out of the narrative)? If so what? Why are they left out?
19. What effect is created by the contrasted descriptions of Jerome Searing dead and Jerome Searing alive?
20. What genre would you say this short story is?

Using this grid, define the methods used by Bierce in 'One of the Missing' to give meaning to the narrative and give an example of each of the methods in use.

Aspect of Method	Definition	Example
THIRD PERSON NARRATOR		
OMNISCIENT NARRATOR		
RELIABLE NARRATOR		
ELLIPSIS/NARRATIVE GAP		
ANALEPSIS		
PROLEPSIS		
ACCELERATION		
DECELERATION		
REPETITIVE DISCREPENCY OF FREQUENCY		
CHARACTERISATION		
GENRE		
SETTING		

5. A Glossary of Literary Terms

To finish, here is a list of useful terms you may need over the course of your Literature course. Good luck for September!

To find a particular term, use your browser's Find command (on the Edit menu in Netscape, for example). Note: Terms already in the Handbook of Rhetorical Devices have been deleted from this file.

Adventure novel. A novel where exciting events are more important than character development and sometimes theme. Examples:

- H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines*
- Baroness Orczy, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*
- Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*
- Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*

Allegory. A figurative work in which a surface narrative carries a secondary, symbolic or metaphorical meaning. In *The Faerie Queene*, for example, Red Cross Knight is a heroic knight in the literal narrative, but also a figure representing Everyman in the Christian journey. Many works contain allegories or are allegorical in part, but not many are entirely allegorical. A good example of a fully allegorical work is

- Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*

Apologue. A moral fable, usually featuring personified animals or inanimate objects which act like people to allow the author to comment on the human condition. Often, the apologue highlights the irrationality of mankind. The beast fable, and the fables of Aesop are examples. Some critics have called Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* an apologue rather than a novel because it is more concerned with moral philosophy than with character or plot. Examples:

- George Orwell, *Animal Farm*
- Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book*

Autobiographical novel. A novel based on the author's life experience. Many novelists include in their books people and events from their own lives because remembrance is easier than creation from scratch. Examples:

- James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel*

Blank Verse. Unrhymed iambic pentameter.

Burlesque. A work designed to ridicule a style, literary form, or subject matter either by treating the exalted in a trivial way or by discussing the trivial in exalted terms (that is, with mock dignity). Burlesque concentrates on derisive imitation, usually in exaggerated terms. Literary genres (like the tragic drama) can be burlesqued, as can styles of sculpture, philosophical movements, schools of art, and so forth. See **Parody, Travesty**.

Caesura. A pause, metrical or rhetorical, occurring somewhere in a line of poetry. The pause may or may not be typographically indicated.

Canon. In relation to literature, this term is half-seriously applied to those works generally accepted as the great ones. A battle is now being fought to change or throw out the canon for three reasons. First, the list of great books is thoroughly dominated by DWEM's (dead, white, European males), and the accusation is that women and minorities and non-Western cultural writers have been ignored. Second, there is pressure in the literary community to throw out all standards as the nihilism of the late 20th century makes itself felt in the literature departments of the universities. Scholars and professors want to choose the books they like or which reflect their own ideas, without worrying about canonicity. Third, the canon has always been determined at least in part by political considerations and personal philosophical biases. Books are much more likely to be called "great" if they reflect the philosophical ideas of the critic.

Children's novel. A novel written for children and discerned by one or more of these: (1) a child character or a character a child can identify with, (2) a theme or themes (often didactic) aimed at children, (3) vocabulary and sentence structure available to a young reader. Many "adult" novels, such as *Gulliver's Travels,* are read by children. The test is that the book be interesting to and--at some level--accessible by children. Examples:

- Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer*
- L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Christian novel. A novel either explicitly or implicitly informed by Christian faith and often containing a plot revolving around the Christian life, evangelism, or conversion stories. Sometimes the plots are directly religious, and sometimes they are allegorical or symbolic. Traditionally, most Christian novels have been viewed as having less literary quality than the "great" novels of Western literature. Examples:

- Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps*
- Lloyd C. Douglas, *The Robe*
- Henryk Sienkiewicz, *Quo Vadis*
- Par Lagerkvist, *Barabbas*
- Catherine Marshall, *Christy*
- C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*
- G. K. Chesterton, *The Man Who was Thursday*
- Bodie Thoene, *In My Father's House*

Coming-of-age story. A type of novel where the protagonist is initiated into adulthood through knowledge, experience, or both, often by a process of disillusionment. Understanding comes after the dropping of preconceptions, a destruction of a false sense of security, or in some way the loss of innocence. Some of the shifts that take place are these:

- ignorance to knowledge
- innocence to experience
- false view of world to correct view
- idealism to realism
- immature responses to mature responses

Example:

- Jane Austen *Northanger Abbey*

Conceit. An elaborate, usually intellectually ingenious poetic comparison or image, such as an analogy or metaphor in which, say a beloved is compared to a ship, planet, etc. The comparison may be brief or extended. See **Petrarchan Conceit**. (Conceit is an old word for concept.) See John Donne's "Valediction:

Forbidding Mourning," for example: "Let man's soul be a sphere, and then, in this, / The Intelligence that moves, devotion is."

Detective novel. A novel focusing on the solving of a crime, often by a brilliant detective, and usually employing the elements of mystery and suspense. Examples:

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*
- Agatha Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express*
- Dorothy Sayers, *Strong Poison*

Dystopian novel. An anti-utopian novel where, instead of a paradise, everything has gone wrong in the attempt to create a perfect society. See *utopian novel.* Examples:

- George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
- Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

End-stopped. A line that has a natural pause at the end (period, comma, etc.). For example, these lines are end stopped:

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun.
Coral is far more red than her lips red. --Shakespeare

Enjambed. The running over of a sentence or thought into the next couplet or line without a pause at the end of the line; a run-on line. For example, the first two lines here are enjambed:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove. . . . --Shakespeare

Epic. An extended narrative poem recounting actions, travels, adventures, and heroic episodes and written in a high style (with ennobled diction, for example). It may be written in hexameter verse, especially dactylic hexameter, and it may have twelve books or twenty four books. Characteristics of the classical epic include these:

- The main character or protagonist is heroically larger than life, often the source and subject of legend or a national hero
- The deeds of the hero are presented without favoritism, revealing his failings as well as his virtues
- The action, often in battle, reveals the more-than-human strength of the heroes as they engage in acts of heroism and courage
- The setting covers several nations, the whole world, or even the universe
- The episodes, even though they may be fictional, provide an explanation for some of the circumstances or events in the history of a nation or people
- The gods and lesser divinities play an active role in the outcome of actions
- All of the various adventures form an organic whole, where each event relates in some way to the central theme

Typical in epics is a set of conventions (or epic machinery). Among them are these:

- Poem begins with a statement of the theme ("Arms and the man I sing")
- Invocation to the muse or other deity ("Sing, goddess, of the wrath of Achilles")
- Story begins *in medias res* (in the middle of things)
- Catalogs (of participants on each side, ships, sacrifices)

- Histories and descriptions of significant items (who made a sword or shield, how it was decorated, who owned it from generation to generation)
- Epic simile (a long simile where the image becomes an object of art in its own right as well as serving to clarify the subject).
- Frequent use of epithets ("Aeneas the true"; "rosy-fingered Dawn"; "tall-masted ship")
- Use of patronymics (calling son by father's name): "Anchises' son"
- Long, formal speeches by important characters
- Journey to the underworld
- Use of the number three (attempts are made three times, etc.)
- Previous episodes in the story are later recounted

Examples:

- Homer, *Iliad*
- Homer, *Odyssey*
- Virgil, *Aeneid*
- Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered*
- Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Epistolary novel. A novel consisting of letters written by a character or several characters. The form allows for the use of multiple points of view toward the story and the ability to dispense with an omniscient narrator. Examples:

- Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*
- Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*
- Fanny Burney, *Evelina*
- C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*
- Hannah W. Foster, *The Coquette*

Euphemism. The substitution of a mild or less negative word or phrase for a harsh or blunt one, as in the use of "pass away" instead of "die." The basic psychology of euphemistic language is the desire to put something bad or embarrassing in a positive (or at least neutral light). Thus many terms referring to death, sex, crime, and excremental functions are euphemisms. Since the euphemism is often chosen to disguise something horrifying, it can be exploited by the satirist through the use of irony and exaggeration.

Euphuism. A highly ornate style of writing popularized by John Lyly's *Euphues*, characterized by balanced sentence construction, rhetorical tropes, and multiplied similes and allusions.

Existentialist novel. A novel written from an existentialist viewpoint, often pointing out the absurdity and meaninglessness of existence. Example:

- Albert Camus, *The Stranger*

Fantasy novel. Any novel that is disengaged from reality. Often such novels are set in nonexistent worlds, such as under the earth, in a fairyland, on the moon, etc. The characters are often something other than human or include nonhuman characters. Example:

- J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

Flashback. A device that allows the writer to present events that happened before the time of the current narration or the current events in the fiction. Flashback techniques include memories, dreams, stories of the past told by characters, or even authorial sovereignty. (That is, the author might simply say, "But back

in Tom's youth. . . .") Flashback is useful for exposition, to fill in the reader about a character or place, or about the background to a conflict.

Foot. The basic unit of meter consisting of a group of two or three syllables. Scanning or scansion is the process of determining the prevailing foot in a line of poetry, of determining the types and sequence of different feet.

Types of feet: U (unstressed); / (stressed syllable)

Iamb: U /
Trochee: / U
Anapest: U U /
Dactyl: / U U
Spondee: / /
Pyrrhic: U U

See also **versification**, below.

Frame. A narrative structure that provides a setting and exposition for the main narrative in a novel. Often, a narrator will describe where he found the manuscript of the novel or where he heard someone tell the story he is about to relate. The frame helps control the reader's perception of the work, and has been used in the past to help give credibility to the main section of the novel. Examples of novels with frames:

- Mary Shelley *Frankenstein*
- Nathaniel Hawthorne *The Scarlet Letter*

Free verse. Verse that has neither regular rhyme nor regular meter. Free verse often uses cadences rather than uniform metrical feet.

Gothic novel. A novel in which supernatural horrors and an atmosphere of unknown terror pervades the action. The setting is often a dark, mysterious castle, where ghosts and sinister humans roam menacingly. Horace Walpole invented the genre with his *Castle of Otranto*. Gothic elements include these:

- Ancient prophecy, especially mysterious, obscure, or hard to understand.
- Mystery and suspense
- High emotion, sentimentalism, but also pronounced anger, surprise, and especially terror
- Supernatural events (e.g. a giant, a sighing portrait, ghosts or their apparent presence, a skeleton)
- Omens, portents, dream visions
- Fainting, frightened, screaming women
- Women threatened by powerful, impetuous male
- Setting in a castle, especially with secret passages
- The metonymy of gloom and horror (wind, rain, doors grating on rusty hinges, howls in the distance, distant sighs, footsteps approaching, lights in abandoned rooms, gusts of wind blowing out lights or blowing suddenly, characters trapped in rooms or imprisoned)
- The vocabulary of the gothic (use of words indicating fear, mystery, etc.: apparition, devil, ghost, haunted, terror, fright)

Examples:

- Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*

- William Beckford, *Vathek*
- Anne Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
- Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca*

Heroic Couplet. Two lines of rhyming iambic pentameter. Most of Alexander Pope's verse is written in heroic couplets. In fact, it is the most favored verse form of the eighteenth century. Example:

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  u    /    u    /  u    /  u     /  u    /
'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill


 u  /   u  /   u   / u  /   u   /
Appear in writing or in judging ill. . . .

      --Alexander Pope
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[Note in the second line that "or" should be a stressed syllable if the meter were perfectly iambic. Iambic= a two syllable foot of one unstressed and one stressed syllable, as in the word "begin." Pentameter= five feet. Thus, iambic pentameter has ten syllables, five feet of two syllable iambs.]

Historical novel. A novel where fictional characters take part in actual historical events and interact with real people from the past. Examples:

- Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*
- Sir Walter Scott, *Waverly*
- James Fenimore Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*
- Lloyd C. Douglas, *The Robe*

Horatian Satire. In general, a gentler, more good humored and sympathetic kind of satire, somewhat tolerant of human folly even while laughing at it. Named after the poet Horace, whose satire epitomized it. Horatian satire tends to ridicule human folly in general or by type rather than attack specific persons. Compare Juvenalian satire.

Humanism. The new emphasis in the Renaissance on human culture, education and reason, sparked by a revival of interest in classical Greek and Roman literature, culture, and language. Human nature and the dignity of man were exalted and emphasis was placed on the present life as a worthy event in itself (as opposed to the medieval emphasis on the present life merely as preparation for a future life).

Humours. In medieval physiology, four liquids in the human body affecting behavior. Each humour was associated with one of the four elements of nature. In a balanced personality, no humour predominated. When a humour did predominate, it caused a particular personality. Here is a chart of the humours, the corresponding elements and personality characteristics:

- *blood*...air...hot and moist: sanguine, kind, happy, romantic
- *phlegm*...water...cold and moist: phlegmatic, sedentary, sickly, fearful
- *yellow bile*...fire...hot and dry: choleric, ill-tempered, impatient, stubborn
- *black bile*...earth...cold and dry: melancholy, gluttonous, lazy, contemplative

The Renaissance took the doctrine of humours quite seriously--it was their model of psychology--so knowing that can help us understand the characters in the literature. Falstaff, for example, has a dominance of blood, while Hamlet seems to have an excess of black bile.

Hypertext novel. A novel that can be read in a nonsequential way. That is, whereas most novels flow from beginning to end in a continuous, linear fashion, a hypertext novel can branch--the reader can move from one place in the text to another nonsequential place whenever he wishes to trace an idea or follow a character. Also called hyperfiction. Most are published on CD-ROM. See also *interactive novel.* Examples:

- Michael Joyce, *Afternoon*
- Stuart Moulthrop, *Victory Garden*

Interactive novel. A novel with more than one possible series of events or outcomes. The reader is given the opportunity at various places to choose what will happen next. It is therefore possible for several readers to experience different novels by reading the same book or for one reader to experience different novels by reading the same one twice and making different choices.

Invective. Speech or writing that abuses, denounces, or attacks. It can be directed against a person, cause, idea, or system. It employs a heavy use of negative emotive language. Example:

- I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth. --Swift

Irony. A mode of expression, through words (verbal irony) or events (irony of situation), conveying a reality different from and usually opposite to appearance or expectation. A writer may say the opposite of what he means, create a reversal between expectation and its fulfillment, or give the audience knowledge that a character lacks, making the character's words have meaning to the audience not perceived by the character. In verbal irony, the writer's meaning or even his attitude may be different from what he says: "Why, no one would dare argue that there could be anything more important in choosing a college than its proximity to the beach." An example of situational irony would occur if a professional pickpocket had his own pocket picked just as he was in the act of picking someone else's pocket. The irony is generated by the surprise recognition by the audience of a reality in contrast with expectation or appearance, while another audience, victim, or character puts confidence in the appearance as reality (in this case, the pickpocket doesn't expect his own pocket to be picked). The surprise recognition by the audience often produces a comic effect, making irony often funny.

An example of dramatic irony (where the audience has knowledge that gives additional meaning to a character's words) would be when King Oedipus, who has unknowingly killed his father, says that he will banish his father's killer when he finds him.

Irony is the most common and most efficient technique of the satirist, because it is an instrument of truth, provides wit and humor, and is usually at least obliquely critical, in that it deflates, scorns, or attacks.

The ability to detect irony is sometimes heralded as a test of intelligence and sophistication. When a text intended to be ironic is not seen as such, the effect can be disastrous. Some students have taken Swift's "Modest Proposal" literally. And Defoe's contemporaries took his "Shortest Way with the Dissenters" literally and jailed him for it. To be an effective piece of sustained irony, there must be some sort of audience tip-off, through style, tone, use of clear exaggeration, or other device.

Juvenalian Satire. Harsher, more pointed, perhaps intolerant satire typified by the writings of Juvenal. Juvenalian satire often attacks particular people, sometimes thinly disguised as fictional characters. While laughter and ridicule are still weapons as with Horatian satire, the Juvenalian satirist also uses withering invective and a slashing attack. Swift is a Juvenalian satirist.

Lampoon. A crude, coarse, often bitter satire ridiculing the personal appearance or character of a person.

Literary quality. A judgment about the value of a novel as literature. At the heart of this issue is the question of what distinguishes a great or important novel from one that is less important. Certainly the feature is not that of interest or excitement, for pulp novels can be even more exciting and interesting than "great" novels. Usually, books that make us think--that offer insight into the human condition--are the ones we rank more highly than books that simply titillate us.

Metaphysical Poetry. The term *metaphysical* was applied to a style of 17th Century poetry first by John Dryden and later by Dr. Samuel Johnson because of the highly intellectual and often abstruse imagery involved.

Chief among the metaphysical poets are John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, and Henry Vaughan. While their poetry is widely varied (the metaphysicals are not a thematic or even a structural school), there are some common characteristics:

- 1. *Argumentative structure.* The poem often engages in a debate or persuasive presentation; the poem is an intellectual exercise as well as or instead of an emotional effusion.
- 2. *Dramatic and colloquial mode of utterance.* The poem often describes a dramatic event rather than being a reverie, a thought, or contemplation. Diction is simple and usually direct; inversion is limited. The verse is occasionally rough, like speech, rather than written in perfect meter, resulting in a dominance of thought over form.
- 3. *Acute realism.* The poem often reveals a psychological analysis; images advance the argument rather than being ornamental. There is a learned style of thinking and writing; the poetry is often highly intellectual.
- 4. *Metaphysical wit.* The poem contains unexpected, even striking or shocking analogies, offering elaborate parallels between apparently dissimilar things. The analogies are drawn from widely varied fields of knowledge, not limited to traditional sources in nature or art. Analogies from science, mechanics, housekeeping, business, philosophy, astronomy, etc. are common. These "conceits" reveal a play of intellect, often resulting in puns, paradoxes, and humorous comparisons. Unlike other poetry where the metaphors usually remain in the background, here the metaphors sometimes take over the poem and control it.

Metaphysical poetry represents a revolt against the conventions of Elizabethan love poetry and especially the typical Petrarchan conceits (like rosy cheeks, eyes like stars, etc.).

Meter. The rhythmic pattern produced when words are arranged so that their stressed and unstressed syllables fall into a more or less regular sequence, resulting in repeated patterns of accent (called feet). See **feet** and **versification.**

Mock Epic. Treating a frivolous or minor subject seriously, especially by using the machinery and devices of the **epic** (invocations, descriptions of armor, battles, extended similes, etc.). The opposite of travesty. Examples:

- Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad*
- Alexander Pope, *Rape of the Lock*

Multicultural novel. A novel written by a member of or about a cultural minority group, giving insight into non-Western or non-dominant cultural experiences and values, either in the United States or abroad. Examples:

- Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
- Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*
- Forrest Carter, *The Education of Little Tree*
- Margaret Craven, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*
- James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*
- Chaim Potok, *The Chosen*
- Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Penitent*
- Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

Mystery novel. A novel whose driving characteristic is the element of suspense or mystery. Strange, unexplained events, vague threats or terrors, unknown forces or antagonists, all may appear in a mystery novel. Gothic novels and detective novels are often also mystery novels.

Novel. Dare we touch this one with a ten foot pole? Of course we dare, provided that you accept the caveat that novels are so varied that any definition is likely to be inadequate to cover all of them. So here is a place to start: a novel is an extended prose fiction narrative of 50,000 words or more, broadly realistic--concerning the everyday events of ordinary people--and concerned with character. "People in significant action" is one way of describing it.

Another definition might be "an extended, fictional prose narrative about realistic characters and events." It is a representation of life, experience, and learning. Action, discovery, and description are important elements, but the most important tends to be one or more characters--how they grow, learn, find--or don't grow, learn, or find.

Compare the definition of a **romance**, below, and you will see why this definition seems somewhat restrictive.

Novella. A prose fiction longer than a short story but shorter than a novel. There is no standard definition of length, but since rules of thumb are sometimes handy, we might say that the short story ends at about 20,000 words, while the novel begins at about 50,000. Thus, the novella is a fictional work of about 20,000 to 50,000 words. Examples:

- Henry James, *Daisy Miller*
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
- Henry James, *Turn of the Screw*
- Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Novel of manners. A novel focusing on and describing in detail the social customs and habits of a particular social group. Usually these conventions function as shaping or even stifling controls over the behavior of the characters. Examples:

- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
- William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*

Parody. A satiric imitation of a work or of an author with the idea of ridiculing the author, his ideas, or work. The parodist exploits the peculiarities of an author's expression--his propensity to use too many parentheses, certain favorite words, or whatever. The parody may also be focused on, say, an improbable plot with too many convenient events. Fielding's *Shamela* is, in large part, a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*.

Persona. The person created by the author to tell a story. Whether the story is told by an omniscient narrator or by a character in it, the actual author of the work often distances himself from what is said or told by adopting a persona--a personality different from his real one. Thus, the attitudes, beliefs, and degree of understanding expressed by the narrator may not be the same as those of the actual author. Some authors, for example, use narrators who are not very bright in order to create irony.

Petrarchan Conceit. The kind of conceit (see above) used by Italian Renaissance poet Petrarch and popular in Renaissance English sonnets. Eyes like stars or the sun, hair like golden wires, lips like cherries, etc. are common examples. Oxymorons are also common, such as freezing fire, burning ice, etc.

Picaresque novel. An episodic, often autobiographical novel about a rogue or picaro (a person of low social status) wandering around and living off his wits. The wandering hero provides the author with the opportunity to connect widely different pieces of plot, since the hero can wander into any situation. Picaresque novels tend to be satiric and filled with petty detail. Examples:

- Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*
- Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*
- Henry Fielding, *Jonathan Wild*

Pseudonym. A "false name" or alias used by a writer desiring not to use his or her real name. Sometimes called a *nom de plume* or "pen name," pseudonyms have been popular for several reasons.

First, political realities might make it dangerous for the real author to admit to a work. Beatings, imprisonment, and even execution are not unheard of for authors of unpopular works.

Second, an author might have a certain type of work associated with a certain name, so that different names are used for different kinds of work. One pen name might be used for westerns, while another name would be used for science fiction.

Lastly, an author might choose a literary name that sounds more impressive or that will garner more respect than the author's real name. Examples:

- Samuel Clemens used the name Mark Twain
- Mary Ann Evans used the name George Eliot
- Jonathan Swift used the name Lemuel Gulliver (once)

Pulp fiction. Novels written for the mass market, intended to be "a good read,"--often exciting, titillating, thrilling. Historically they have been very popular but critically sneered at as being of sub-literary quality. The earliest ones were the dime novels of the nineteenth century, printed on newsprint (hence "pulp" fiction) and sold for ten cents. Westerns, stories of adventure, even the Horatio Alger novels, all were forms of pulp fiction.

Regional novel. A novel faithful to a particular geographic region and its people, including behavior, customs, speech, and history. Examples:

- Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Thomas Hardy, *Return of the Native*

Rhyme. The similarity between syllable sounds at the end of two or more lines. Some kinds of rhyme (also spelled rime) include:

- *Couplet:* a pair of lines rhyming consecutively.
- *Eye rhyme:* words whose spellings would lead one to think that they rhymed (slough, tough, cough, bough, though, hiccough. Or: love, move, prove. Or: daughter, laughter.)
- *Feminine rhyme:* two syllable rhyme consisting of stressed syllable followed by unstressed.
- *Masculine rhyme:* similarity between terminally stressed syllables.

Ridicule. Words intended to belittle a person or idea and arouse contemptuous laughter. The goal is to condemn or criticize by making the thing, idea, or person seem laughable and ridiculous. It is one of the most powerful methods of criticism, partly because it cannot be satisfactorily answered ("Who can refute a sneer?") and partly because many people who fear nothing else--not the law, not society, not even God--fear being laughed at. (The fear of being laughed at is one of the most inhibiting forces in western civilization. It provides much of the power behind the adolescent flock urge and accounts for many of the barriers to change and adventure in the adult world.) Ridicule is, not surprisingly, a common weapon of the satirist.

Roman a clef. [French for "novel with a key," pronounced roh MAHN ah CLAY] A novel in which historical events and actual people are written about under the pretense of being fiction. Examples:

- Aphra Behn, *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*
- Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

Romance. An extended fictional prose narrative about improbable events involving characters that are quite different from ordinary people. Knights on a quest for a magic sword and aided by characters like fairies and trolls would be examples of things found in romance fiction. Examples:

- Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*
- Sir Philip Sidney, *The Arcadia*

In popular use, the modern romance novel is a formulaic love story (boy meets girl, obstacles interfere, they overcome obstacles, they live happily ever after). Computer software is available for constructing these stock plots and providing stereotyped characters. Consequently, the books usually lack literary merit. Examples:

- Harlequin Romance series

Sarcasm. A form of sneering criticism in which disapproval is often expressed as ironic praise. (Oddly enough, sarcastic remarks are often used between friends, perhaps as a somewhat perverse demonstration of the strength of the bond--only a good friend could say this without hurting the other's feelings, or at least without excessively damaging the relationship, since feelings are often hurt in spite of a close relationship. If you drop your lunch tray and a stranger says, "Well, that was really intelligent," that's sarcasm. If your girlfriend or boyfriend says it, that's love--I think.)

Satire. A literary mode based on criticism of people and society through ridicule. The satirist aims to reduce the practices attacked by laughing scornfully at them--and being witty enough to allow the reader to laugh, also. Ridicule, irony, exaggeration, and several other techniques are almost always present. The satirist may insert serious statements of value or desired behavior, but most often he relies on an implicit moral code, understood by his audience and paid lip service by them. The satirist's goal is to point out the hypocrisy of his target in the hope that either the target or the audience will return to a real following of the code. Thus, satire is inescapably moral even when no explicit values are promoted in the work, for the satirist works within the framework of a widely spread value system. Many of the techniques of satire are devices of comparison, to show the

similarity or contrast between two things. A list of incongruous items, an oxymoron, metaphors, and so forth are examples. See "The Purpose and Method of Satire" for more information.

Science fiction novel. A novel in which futuristic technology or otherwise altered scientific principles contribute in a significant way to the adventures. Often the novel assumes a set of rules or principles or facts and then traces their logical consequences in some form. For example, given that a man discovers how to make himself invisible, what might happen? Examples:

- H. G. Wells, *The Invisible Man*
- Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*
- Arthur C. Clarke, *2001: A Space Odyssey*
- Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*

Sentimental novel. A type of novel, popular in the eighteenth century, that overemphasizes emotion and seeks to create emotional responses in the reader. The type also usually features an overly optimistic view of the goodness of human nature. Examples:

- Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*
- Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*
- Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*
- Thomas Day, *The History of Sandford and Merton*

Sequel. A novel incorporating the same characters and often the same setting as a previous novel. Sometimes the events and situations involve a continuation of the previous novel and sometimes only the characters are the same and the events are entirely unrelated to the previous novel. When sequels result from the popularity of an original, they are often hastily written and not of the same quality as the original. Occasionally a sequel is written by an author different from that of the original novel. See *series.* Examples:

- Mark Twain, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
- Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer Abroad*
- Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer Detective*
- Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind*
- Alexandra Ripley, *Scarlett*

Series. Several novels related to each other, by plot, setting, character, or all three. Book marketers like to refer to multi-volume novels as sagas. Examples:

- Anthony Trollope, Barsetshire novels
- C. S. Lewis, Chronicles of Narnia novels
- L. M. Montgomery, Anne of Avonlea novels
- James Fenimore Cooper, The Leatherstocking Tales

Setting. The total environment for the action of a fictional work. Setting includes time period (such as the 1890's), the place (such as downtown Warsaw), the historical milieu (such as during the Crimean War), as well as the social, political, and perhaps even spiritual realities. The setting is usually established primarily through description, though narration is used also.

Sonnet. A fourteen line poem, usually in iambic pentameter, with a varied rhyme scheme. The two main types of sonnet are the Petrarchan (or Italian) and the Shakespearean. The *Petrarchan Sonnet* is divided into two main sections, the octave (first eight lines) and the sestet (last six lines). The octave presents a problem or situation which is then resolved or commented on in the sestet. The

most common rhyme scheme is A-B-B-A A-B-B-A C-D-E C-D-E, though there is flexibility in the sestet, such as C-D-C D-C-D.

The *Shakespearean Sonnet,* (perfected though not invented by Shakespeare), contains three quatrains and a couplet, with more rhymes (because of the greater difficulty finding rhymes in English). The most common rhyme scheme is A-B-A-B C-D-C-D E-F-E-F G-G. In Shakespeare, the couplet often undercuts the thought created in the rest of the poem.

Spenserian Stanza. A nine-line stanza, with the first eight lines in iambic pentameter and the last line in iambic hexameter (called an Alexandrine). The rhyme scheme is A-B-A-B B-C-B-C C. Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is written in Spenserian stanzas.

Style. The manner of expression of a particular writer, produced by choice of words, grammatical structures, use of literary devices, and all the possible parts of language use. Some general styles might include scientific, ornate, plain, emotive. Most writers have their own particular styles.

Subplot. A subordinate or minor collection of events in a novel or drama. Most subplots have some connection with the main plot, acting as foils to, commentary on, complications of, or support to the theme of, the main plot. Sometimes two opening subplots merge into a main plot.

Symbol. Something that on the surface is its literal self but which also has another meaning or even several meanings. For example, a sword may be a sword and also symbolize justice. A symbol may be said to embody an idea. There are two general types of symbols: universal symbols that embody universally recognizable meanings wherever used, such as light to symbolize knowledge, a skull to symbolize death, etc., and constructed symbols that are given symbolic meaning by the way an author uses them in a literary work, as the white whale becomes a symbol of evil in Moby Dick.

Tone. The writer's attitude toward his readers and his subject; his mood or moral view. A writer can be formal, informal, playful, ironic, and especially, optimistic or pessimistic. While both Swift and Pope are satirizing much the same subjects, there is a profound difference in their tone.

Travesty. A work that treats a serious subject frivolously-- ridiculing the dignified. Often the tone is mock serious and heavy handed.

Utopian novel. A novel that presents an ideal society where the problems of poverty, greed, crime, and so forth have been eliminated. Examples:

- Thomas More, *Utopia*
- Samuel Butler, *Erewhon*
- Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*

Verisimilitude. How fully the characters and actions in a work of fiction conform to our sense of reality. To say that a work has a high degree of verisimilitude means that the work is very realistic and believable--it is "true to life.".

Versification. Generally, the structural form of a verse, as revealed by scansion. Identification of verse structure includes the name of the metrical type and the name designating number of feet:

- Monometer: 1 foot
- Dimeter: 2 feet
- Trimeter: 3 feet
- Tetrameter: 4 feet

- Pentameter: 5 feet
- Hexameter: 6 feet
- Heptameter: 7 feet
- Octameter: 8 feet
- Nonameter: 9 feet

The most common verse in English poetry is iambic pentameter. See **foot** for more information.

Western. A novel set in the western United States featuring the experiences of cowboys and frontiersmen. Many are little more than adventure novels or even pulp fiction, but some have literary value. Examples:

- Walter Van Tilburg Clark, *The Ox-Bow Incident*
- Owen Wister, *The Virginian*

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